

(19)



Europäisches Patentamt  
European Patent Office  
Office européen des brevets

(31) Publication number:

**0 027 022**  
**A1**

(12)

# EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

(21) Application number: 80303427.1

(51) Int. Cl.<sup>2</sup>: **C 07 D 207/267, C 07 D 207/27,**  
**B 01 J 23/89**

(22) Date of filing: 29.09.80

(30) Priority: 05.10.79 US 82192

(71) Applicant: **THE STANDARD OIL COMPANY**, Midland  
Building, Cleveland, Ohio 44115 (US)

(43) Date of publication of application: 15.04.81  
Bulletin 81/15

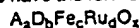
(72) Inventor: **Pesa, Frederick Anthony**, 764 Circlewood Drive,  
Aurora Ohio 44202 (US)  
Inventor: **Graham, Anne Marie**, 6290 Greenwood  
Parkway, Northfield Ohio 44067 (US)

(84) Designated Contracting States: **BE CH DE FR GB IT LI**  
**LU NL SE**

(74) Representative: **Smith, Sydney et al**, Eldington and Fife  
High Holborn House 52/54 High Holborn, London  
WC1V 6SH (GB)

(54) Production of five-membered nitrogen-containing saturated heterocyclic compounds and catalyst suitable therefor.

(57) A process for the preparation of five-membered nitrogen-containing saturated heterocyclic compounds, such as pyrrolidone having high yield and selectivity results from carrying out a catalytic hydrogenation/amination of a five-membered heterocyclic anhydride or the corresponding acid in the presence of a complex catalyst containing ruthenium. Preferred catalysts have the formula:-



In a representative embodiment maleic anhydride is converted to pyrrolidone by hydrogenation/amination in the presence of a ruthenium containing catalyst at a pressure of approximately 70 kg/cm<sup>2</sup> at a temperature of approximately 250 °C.

**EP 0 027 022 A1**

"Production of five-membered nitrogen-containing saturated heterocyclic compounds and catalyst suitable therefor".

This invention relates to the production of five-membered nitrogen-containing saturated heterocyclic compounds, e.g. pyrrolidone and to a catalyst useful in such production. Such compounds are useful  
5 as intermediates in the preparation of nylon-4 type polymers. These compounds are also useful in the preparation of n-methyl pyrrolidone and n-vinyl pyrrolidone which can be used as organic solvents.

The production of pyrrolidone from maleic an-  
10 hydride is known. For example, U.S. Patent 3,109,005, discloses a process wherein a mixture of maleic anhydride, dioxan and Raney nickel are charged to a reactor at a temperature of 250°C and a pressure of 200 atmospheres for approximately 10 hours. Moreover,  
15 Japanese Patent 71/37,590 discloses a process wherein maleic anhydride is hydrogenated in dioxan at below 100°C at 145 atmospheres in the presence of a supported cobalt nickel catalyst. Ammonia is then added to the reaction vessel and the temperature is increased  
20 to 250°C to produce pyrrolidone.

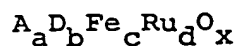
The prior art methods for producing pyrrolidone are each disadvantageous for various reasons. First, these reactions required very high temperatures and pressures. Second, some of the prior art processes  
25 are two-step processes. Third, long reaction times are necessary. The process of the present invention on the other hand, can be conducted continuously in a single step at moderate temperatures and pressures to produce pyrrolidone from maleic anhydride. Further-  
30 more, the process of the present invention results in high yields and selectivities of pyrrolidone.

The present invention provides a process for

producing a five-membered saturated nitrogen-containing heterocyclic compound by contacting hydrogen, an amine and at least one five-membered oxygen-containing heterocyclic anhydride or the corresponding acid in the presence of an oxide complex catalyst containing ruthenium.

In particular the invention provides a process for the production of pyrrolidone, said process comprising contacting hydrogen, aqueous ammonia and maleic anhydride in the presence of an oxide complex catalyst containing ruthenium, iron and nickel or cobalt.

A particular ruthenium-containing oxide complex catalyst composition is one comprising an oxide complex of the formula:



in which A is Ni, Co or a mixture thereof;  
D represents one or more of the following: Rh, Pd, Os, Ir, Pt and Zn; and  
a, c and d are 0.01 to 1;  
b is 0 to 1; and  
x represents the number of oxygens required to satisfy the valence requirements of the other elements present in the catalyst.

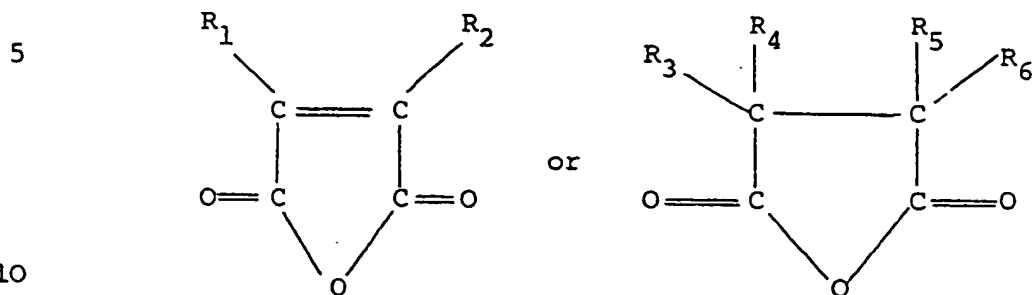
#### Reactants

Generally, any five-membered oxygen-containing heterocyclic anhydride or corresponding acid can be employed as a reactant in the process of the present invention. However, steric hindrance may become a factor and the reaction rate may be reduced if this reactant is substituted with one or more bulky groups.

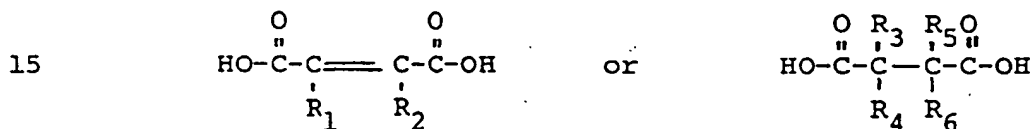
Preferred heterocyclic anhydrides or corresponding

acids which are useful in the present process have the following structural formulae:

Anhydrides:



Corresponding Acids:



20 wherein  $R_1, R_2, R_3, R_4, R_5$  and  $R_6$  which may be the same or different, represent hydrogen or a  $C_{1-4}$  alkyl group.

Preferably,  $R_1, R_2, R_3, R_4, R_5$  and  $R_6$  which may be the same or different represent hydrogen or a  $C_{1-2}$  alkyl group.

25 Most preferably,  $R_1, R_2, R_3, R_4, R_5$  and  $R_6$  each represent hydrogen.

Examples of reactants which are within the scope of this invention are maleic anhydride and succinic anhydride and the corresponding acids.

30 A wide variety of amines may also be used in the present process. Primary amines all having the following formula:



wherein  $R_7$  represents hydrogen or a  $C_{1-4}$  alkyl group or an aryl group;

or a group  $-(CH_2)_q-OH$ , wherein  $q$  is 1 to 4.

Preferably,  $R_7$  is hydrogen in which case the  
5 amine is ammonia, or a methyl group.

The ratio of the reactants, i.e. heterocyclic anhydride or corresponding acid, amine and hydrogen, charged to the reactor in this process is not critical. The reaction will proceed as long as some of each of  
10 these reactants is present in the reaction system. However, it is preferred to conduct the reaction in the presence of an excess of hydrogen and amine. Generally, this reaction is conducted with 3 to 20  
15 moles of hydrogen per mole of heterocyclic anhydride and from 1 to 5 moles of amine per mole of heterocyclic anhydride. These reactants can be added separately to the reaction zone or two or more of these reactants may be combined before they enter the reaction zone.

If desired, a carrier which is inert to the  
20 reactants, products and catalyst can be included within the reaction system. Suitable carriers include water and dioxan.

#### Process Conditions

In carrying out the process according to the  
25 invention the heterocyclic anhydride or corresponding acid, hydrogen and an amine are contacted in the presence of the catalyst described below for effecting the hydrogenation/amination reaction. The process of this invention may be conducted using various  
30 techniques and reactors, and both batch type and continuous operations are contemplated. Additionally, recycle of the reaction product to the reaction mixture may be beneficial to the reaction. In a preferred preparation, aqueous ammonia and the  
35 heterocyclic anhydride in the desired concentrations

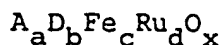
are contacted with hydrogen over the catalyst in a continuous manner.

The reaction temperature may range from 100°C to 400°C, but preferably temperatures within the range of from about 100°C to 300°C are employed. The reaction is continued at the desired temperature for a period of time ranging from 0.1 to 5 hours, however, with continuous operation the contact time may be as low as 0.01 hours.

While the reaction may be carried out using pressures ranging from 35 kg/cm<sup>2</sup> to 350 kg/cm<sup>2</sup> (500 to 5,000 psi) one of the more important advantages associated with this process is that optimum results are obtained at much lower pressures than are employed in the processes of the prior art. The use of lower pressures in the process of the present invention minimizes side reactions and has the important economic significance of requiring less expensive reactor equipment. Preferably, hydrogen pressures of approximately 70 kg/cm<sup>2</sup> (1,000 psi) are employed.

#### Catalysts

Any catalyst containing ruthenium oxide may be employed in the process of the present invention. The oxide complex catalysts which are particularly useful in this invention can be represented by the following formula:



wherein A is nickel, cobalt or a mixture thereof;  
D is one or more of the following:

Rh, Pd, Os, Ir, Pt and Zn; and

wherein a, b and c are each independently 0 to 1; with the proviso that a and c cannot both be equal to 0;

d is 0.01 to 1; and

x represents the number of oxygens required to satisfy the valence requirements of the other elements present in the catalyst.

5           This oxide complex catalyst can be any catalyst delineated by the general formula above with respect to the components of the catalyst. Those catalysts are preferred in which A is nickel and both a and c are 0.01 to 1.

10           The exact chemical nature of this oxide complex catalyst is not known. This catalyst may be a mixture of oxides, for example, or an oxide complex of all the contained elements. In any event, this type of catalyst is generally known in the art.

15           The oxide complex catalyst can be made by techniques which are essentially the same as those techniques described in the art for other oxidation catalysts. (See U.S. 3,642,930, which is herein incorporated by reference). Even though there are  
20 numerous techniques that may be utilized to give acceptable oxide complex catalysts, some of the preferred methods of making these catalysts are described below.

          These catalysts can be prepared from any mixture  
25 of compounds that can give the desired oxide components. Preferably, the catalyst is prepared by coprecipitating decomposable salts such as nitrates, acetates, halides and/or oxides. These catalysts are effective in both the calcined and uncalcined form. Reduction or  
30 partial reduction of the complexed catalyst with hydrogen before reaction is preferred. Since the presence of  $\text{Na}^+$  and  $\text{Cl}^-$  ions in the catalyst seems to decrease the yield, it is preferable to use catalyst preparation techniques wherein no  $\text{Na}^+$  or  
35  $\text{Cl}^-$  can be incorporated into the catalyst.

These catalysts can be used in the supported, unsupported or coated form. Preferred support materials are silica,  $ZrO_2$ , alumina, phosphates, silica alumina and zeolites. Any other known support material can be used which is stable under the reaction conditions to be encountered in the use of the catalyst. In the supported form, the support preferably comprises 5% to 95% by weight of the catalyst, preferably 10% to 60% by weight of the catalyst. In the coated catalyst form the inert material is preferably in the range of from 20% to 99% by weight of the catalyst.

#### Recovery

The reaction product obtained upon completion of the reaction is normally in the vapour phase. This reaction product can be subjected to suitable known separation techniques, e.g. condensation followed by solvent extraction or fractional distillation, to yield the desired end product.

The following Examples illustrate the invention. In these examples, conversions and yields are defined as follows:

$$\text{Conv.} = \frac{\text{Moles Heterocyclic Anhydride Reacted}}{\text{Moles Heterocyclic Anhydride Fed}} \times 100$$

$$\text{Yield} = \frac{\text{Moles Product}}{\text{Moles Heterocyclic Anhydride Fed}} \times 100$$

#### Example 1

A catalyst comprising 30%  $RuFeO_x$  on  $SiO_x$  was prepared as follows. First, 18.68 grams of  $RuCl_3 \cdot 1.4H_2O$  and 21.62 grams of  $FeCl_3 \cdot 6H_2O$  were dissolved in 300 ml. of water and stirred for 30 minutes. A 50% NaOH and water solution was added dropwise with constant stirring to bring the pH up to 8.6 and to precipitate the oxides.



The slurry was stirred and heated near boiling for 30 minutes, cooled, filtered and washed thoroughly. The resulting mixed oxide was dried overnight at 125°C and calcined for 3 hours at 350°C, and then ground to pass 140 mesh.

Next, 15 grams of the above oxide were slurried in 50 ml. of water. To this solution was added 87.5 grams of Nalco silica solution (40% solids). The mixture was heated and stirred until it reached the consistency of toothpaste. The catalyst was then dried overnight at 125°C, calcined for 3 hours at 350°C and ground to 10/40 (2.00 mm/425  $\mu$ m) mesh.

A fixed-bed reactor was packed with 40 cc. of the above catalyst, and the system was charged to the desired pressure. Hydrogen was allowed to pass over the catalyst at 150 cc. per minute while the reactor was heated to the reaction temperature in stages. The system was then left to pre-reduce and equilibrate, under H<sub>2</sub> flow, for 2 hours.

The liquid feed, 10% maleic anhydride in water with 2 moles of ammonia per mole of maleic anhydride, was pumped in at 20 cc. per hour. The product was then condensed in a separate cooled receiver for 1 hour. At the completion of the collection run, the product was analyzed for pyrrolidone. The results are shown in Table I.

#### Example 2

A catalyst comprising 18% RuFeO<sub>x</sub> on Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> with 10% SiO<sub>2</sub> was prepared as follows. First, a mixed oxide RuFeO<sub>x</sub> catalyst was prepared as shown above. 15 grams of this mixed oxide and 60 grams of Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> powder were slurried in 150 ml. of water. This mixture was evaporated with stirring to the consistency of toothpaste. The catalyst was then dried at 125°C overnight. The resulting fine powder was reslurried

in 100 ml. of water and 20.75 grams Nalco silica solution (40% solids). This slurry was evaporated and dried overnight at 125°C, calcined for 3 hours at 350°C and ground to 10/40 (2.00 mm/425  $\mu$ m) mesh.

5 This catalyst was placed in the experimental set-up disclosed in Example 1. The results are shown in Table I.

Example 3

10 A catalyst comprising 5%  $\text{RuFeO}_x$  on  $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$  was prepared by the above method and placed into the experimental apparatus. The results are shown in Table I.

Example 4

15 A mixed metal oxide comprising  $\text{RuFeO}_x$  was prepared as shown in Example 1 using 7.01 grams of  $\text{RuCl}_3 \cdot 1.4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and 8.11 grams of  $\text{FeCl}_3 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ . Next, 50 grams of Norton SA 5223 Alundum, 10/30 (2.00 mm/600  $\mu$ m) mesh, were placed in a pint (0.56 litre) glass jar. 5.4 grams of water were sprayed onto the Alundum in two  
20 portions and the jar was rolled on a ballmiller for 10 minutes after each addition. 1.4 grams of the mixed metal oxide were added and the jar was then rolled on a ballmiller for 15 minutes. This last step, addition of 1.4 grams of mixed metal oxide, was  
25 repeated. The coated catalyst was dried overnight at 125°C and calcined for 3 hours at 350°C.

This catalyst was then placed in the experimental apparatus discussed in Example 1 and the results are shown in Table I.

30 Examples 5 through 7

Catalysts comprising  $\text{RuFeCoO}_x$ ,  $\text{RuFePdO}_x$  and  $\text{RuZnNiO}_x$  were coated on Alundum. These catalysts were prepared by the method shown in Example 4 and were placed in the experimental apparatus shown in  
35 Example 1. The results are tabulated in Table I.

Table I

Hydrogenation/Amination of Maleic Anhydride  
in the Presence of Various Catalysts

5

Temperature: 250°C.

Pressure: 70 kg/cm<sup>2</sup> (1,000 psi).

10	<u>Example</u>	<u>Catalyst</u>	<u>Conv. (%)</u>	<u>Yield (%)</u>
	1	30% RuFeO <sub>x</sub> on SiO <sub>2</sub>	100.0	20.1
	2	20% RuFeO <sub>x</sub> on 90% Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> and 10% SiO <sub>2</sub>	83.7	45.2
15	3	5% RuFeO <sub>x</sub> on Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	89.8	41.5
	4	RuFeNiO <sub>x</sub>	81.3	77.3
	5	RuFeCoO <sub>x</sub>	99.0	39.1
	6	RuFePdO <sub>x</sub>	100.0	32.8
	7	RuZnNiO <sub>x</sub>	100.0	61.4

20

Examples 8 through 14

A catalyst comprising RuFeNiO<sub>x</sub> was prepared as shown in Example 4 and placed into the experimental apparatus disclosed in Example 1. The process

25 parameters of this process were varied as shown in Table II. The yield of pyrrolidone obtained in these examples is also shown in Table II.

Table II

Hydrogenation/Amination of Maleic Anhydride

5 Catalyst: RuFeNiO<sub>x</sub>  
Liquid Fee: 10% MAH (2:1 NH<sub>3</sub>/MAH)

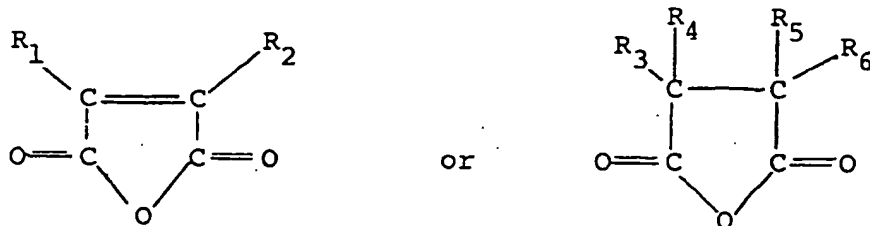
<u>Example</u>		<u>Temperature</u> (°C)	<u>Pressure</u> (kg/cm <sup>2</sup> )	<u>H<sub>2</sub> Flow Rate</u> (cc/min)
10	8	250	70	150
	9	200	70	150
	10	250	35	150
	11	250	70	300
	12	250	70	300
15	13	250	70	75
	14	250	84	150
<u>Example</u>		<u>Liquid Flow Rate</u> (cc/min)	<u>Conversion</u> (%)	<u>Yield</u> (%)
20	8	20	81.3	77.3
	9	20	100.0	19.2
	10	20	100.0	15.8
	11	40	100.0	61.8
25	12	20	98.0	43.1
	13	20	99.0	69.7
	14	20	97.0	51.9

Although only a few embodiments of the present invention have been specifically described above, it should be appreciated that many additions and modifications can be made without departing from the invention.

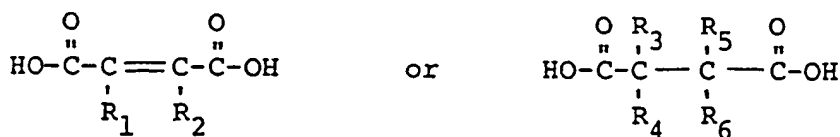
Claims:

1. A process for producing a five-membered saturated nitrogen-containing heterocyclic compound comprising contacting hydrogen, an amine and a five-membered oxygen-containing heterocyclic anhydride or the corresponding acid in the presence of an oxide complex catalyst containing ruthenium.
2. A process as claimed in claim 1 characterised in that the heterocyclic anhydride or corresponding acid is represented by the following formulas:

Anhydrides



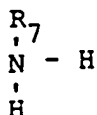
Corresponding Acids



wherein  $R_1, R_2, R_3, R_4, R_5$  and  $R_6$  are each independently selected from

- (1) hydrogen;
- (2)  $C_{1-4}$  alkyl groups.

3. A process as claimed in claim 2 characterised in that  $R_1, R_2, R_3, R_4, R_5$  and  $R_6$  are hydrogen.
4. A process as claimed in any of claims 1 to 3 characterised in that the amine is represented by the following formula:



in which  $R_7$  is selected from

- (1) hydrogen;
- (2) a  $C_{1-4}$  alkyl group;
- (3) an aryl group; and
- (4) a group  $-(CH_2)_q-OH$ , wherein  $q$  is 1 to 4.

5. A process as claimed in claim 4 characterised in that  $R_7$  is hydrogen or methyl.

6. A process as claimed in any of claims 1 to 5 characterised in that the ratio of hydrogen to the heterocyclic anhydride or corresponding acid is from 3:1 to 20:1.

7. A process as claimed in any of claims 1 to 6 in which the reaction is maintained at a pressure of approximately  $70 \text{ kg/cm}^2$  (1,000 psi).

8. A process as claimed in any of claims 1 to 7 characterised in that the catalyst is represented by the formula:



wherein A is cobalt, nickel or a mixture thereof;

and D is one or more of the following

Rh, Pd, Os, Ir, Pt, and Zn;

and a, b and c are each independently 0 to 1;

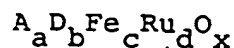
with the proviso that a and c are not both equal to 0;

d is 0.01 to 1;

and x represents the number of oxygens required to satisfy the valence requirements of the other elements present in the catalyst.

9. A process as claimed in claim 8 characterised in that A is nickel.

10. A process as claimed in claim 8 characterised in that c is greater than 0.
11. A process as claimed in claim 8 characterised in that a is greater than 0.
12. A process as claimed in claim 8 characterised in that b is greater than 0.
13. A process as claimed in claim 8 characterised in that the catalyst is an oxide complex containing Ru, Fe and Ni.
14. A process as claimed in any of claims 1 to 13 characterised in that the process is a single step process.
15. A catalyst composition comprising an oxide complex of the formula:



wherein A is Ni or Co or a mixture thereof;  
D is one or more of the following  
Rh, Pd, Os, Ir, Pt and Zn; and  
a, c and d are 0.01 to 1;  
b is 0 to 1; and  
x represents the number of oxygens  
required to satisfy the valence  
requirements of the other elements  
present in the catalyst.

17. A catalyst composition as claimed in claim 16 characterised in that b is greater than 0.
18. A catalyst composition as claimed in claim 16 characterised in that A is Ni.





European Patent  
Office

# EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

0027022  
Application number  
EP 80303427.1

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl. 3)
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	
	<u>GB - A - 976 939</u> (BADISCHE ANILIN) + Page 1; page 2, lines 1-84; example 1 + --	1-5, 14,15	C 07 D 207/267 C 07 D 207/27 B 01 J 23/89
	<u>GB - A - 1 439 558</u> (MITSUBISHI) + Page 1; page 2, lines 1-25 + --	1-5, 14,15	
X	<u>US - A - 3 448 118</u> (GUY CHICHERY) + Column 1; column 2, lines 1-46, especially line 18 + --	1-5, 14,15	
X	<u>US - A - 3 812 148</u> (ELMER J. HOLL- STEIN) + Totality + ----	1-5,14 15	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl. 3)
			C 07 D 207/00 B 01 J 23/00
			CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS
			X: particularly relevant A: technological background O: non-written disclosure P: intermediate document T: theory or principle underlying the invention E: conflicting application D: document cited in the application L: citation for other reasons
			&: member of the same patent family, corresponding document
X	The present search report has been drawn up for all claims		
Place of search VIENNA		Date of completion of the search 10-12-1980	Examiner ONDER

EPO Form 1503.1 08.78